

THE COSMIC RESURRECTIONS.

BY LAWRENCE PARMLY BROWN.

II.

An early tradition in which the resurrection of Jesus was his only miracle appears to be preserved in Matt. xii. 38-41, where some of the scribes and Pharisees say they wish to see a sign (or miracle) from him, and he answers: "A generation wicked and adulterous seeks for a sign, and a sign shall not be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet (cf. xvi. 4, and Luke xi. 29-32). For even as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish (for the underworld) three days and three nights (see Jonah i. 17), thus shall be the Son of Man (= Jesus) in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." Psalm xvi. 10—"For thou (God) wilt not leave my soul in Sheol (Sept., 'Hades'), neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption"—was recognized as the chief prophecy of the resurrection (and ascension) of Jesus, as in Acts ii. 27. The primitive Christians considered the resurrection of Jesus the great proof of his Messiahship, and the Apostles define their mission as that of witnesses to this event (Acts ii. 14, 15, 22-23; iii. 14, 15, etc.), which was also put forth as a proof that mankind would be resurrected (in the Messianic kingdom—1 Cor. xv. 13-17, etc.), just as the Egyptians declared of Osiris that "he died not (i. e., was not annihilated in the underworld), and thou shalt not die" (Budge, *Gods*, II, pp. 150, 157).

In the original Gospel story of the resurrection of Jesus, he was probably conceived in the character of the sun-god who is restored to life three days after his death and at the time of the spring equinox as (approximately) marked by the Jewish Passover; with Mary the Magdalene representing Venus as the morning star, and Peter representing Pisces, the first spring sign at the beginning of the Christian era. But the relation of Isis and Nephthys to the resurrected Osiris appears to have suggested the introduction of

two women in a later version of the Gospel story, where we now find three in Mark's version—as if for the morning star, the dawn and the moon. According to Mark, the death of Jesus occurred late in the afternoon on the day of preparation for the Passover as identified with a Friday—"And the sabbath (Saturday) being past," Mary the Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, very early on the first day of the week (Sunday) came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, "the sun having risen." The great stone before the tomb was found rolled away, and when the women entered, they saw "a young man (an angel) sitting on the right, clothed with a white robe," who announced that Jesus had risen, and said to the women, "But go, say to his disciples and to Peter that he goes before you into Galilee (= Circular, for the zodiac path): there ye shall see him, as he said to you (cf. *ibid.* xiv. 28, and Matt. xxvi. 32): and having gone out quickly, they fled from the tomb. And trembling and amazement possessed them, and to no one they spoke, for they were afraid" (xvi. 1-8). Critics are agreed that what followed in the original Mark has been lost, and that the last twelve verses of the extant text is from a later hand—indeed, some of the earliest manuscripts end with verse 8, after which the old Syriac has "Here endeth the Gospel of Mark." We probably have a fragment of Mark's lost ending in Matt. xxviii. 16, 17: "But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain whither Jesus appointed them. And seeing him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And having come to them, Jesus spoke to them. . . ."

In Matthew's variant parallel to Mark's original account we read: "Now late on the sabbath, as it was getting toward dusk the first day of the week (i. e., toward the Jewish sunset-beginning of that day, answering to our Saturday sunset), came Mary the Magdalene and the other Mary (as if for Isis and Nephthys) to see the sepulcher." Then an angel rolled away the stone from the door and sat on it, bidding the two women to go to the disciples and tell them that Jesus had arisen—"and behold, he goes before you into Galilee; there ye shall see him. . . . But as they were going to tell it to his disciples, behold also Jesus met them, saying, Hail! And they, having come to him, seized hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus says to them, Fear not: Go, tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me" (xxviii. 1-10).

Luke has it that the Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James, "and the rest with them," went to the tomb "on the first day of the week at early dawn"; that they entered and saw two men (angels) in shining garments, who told them that Jesus had

risen—omitting the reference to Galilee, but adding that Jesus had once said in that district that it behooved the Son of Man “to be crucified and the third day to arise.” And having returned from the tomb, the women related what they had heard and seen “to the eleven and all the rest,” after which Peter ran to the tomb and saw that the body of Jesus was not there (xxiv. 1-12). Luke also has a new element in the appearance of Jesus to “two of them,” one of whom was Cleopas (probably originally “Cephas” = Peter), on the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus; but they did not recognize him until he joined them in their meal at the latter place, when “their eyes were opened and they knew him. And he disappeared from them.... And rising up the same hour, they returned to Jerusalem, and they found gathered together the eleven and those with them, saying (to them), The Lord is risen indeed, and appeared to Simon (Peter—of which appearance there is nothing elsewhere in Luke, unless ‘Cleopas’ above be an error of transcription for ‘Cephas’). . . . And these things as they were telling, Jesus himself stood in their midst and says to them, Peace to you. But being terrified and filled with fear, they thought they beheld a spirit”; whereupon Jesus proves that he is “flesh and bones” by showing them his pierced hands and feet, having them handle him, and eating part of a broiled fish and a honeycomb. He then tells them to remain in Jerusalem until they are “clothed with power from on high,” and finally leads them to Bethany, whence he ascends into heaven (verses, 13-53—with nothing of the Galilee appearance of the Mark tradition).

In the Gospel of John (xx) we find the Magdalene alone at the tomb shortly before sunrise (for Venus as the morning star), and Peter arrives somewhat later (as the Apostle of Pisces); but these mythic concepts are obscured by the arbitrary introduction of John himself in connection with Peter. The text has: “But on the first day of the week, Mary the Magdalene comes early, it still being dark, to the tomb, and sees the stone (already) taken away from the tomb. She runs therefore and comes to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple (the one) whom Jesus loved (i. e., John),” and informs them of her discovery. John outruns Peter in a race to the tomb (cf. Peter running thither alone, in Luke), but the latter enters first; and when they leave, Mary remains outside, weeping. She then looks into the tomb, and sees two angels, who converse with her (cf. Luke); and when she turns she “beholds Jesus standing, and knew not that it is Jesus” until he addressed her as “Mary” (as apparently suggested by the rising of the sun). He also says

to her, "Touch me not, for not yet have I ascended to my father; but go to my brethren, and say to them (that) I ascend to my father"—and Mary obeys. "It being therefore evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors having been shut where the disciples were assembled, through fear of the Jews (but probably suggested by the underworld as a closed place), Jesus came and stood in the midst (of them—in spite of the shut doors, implying that his body was then supernatural)." Thomas was absent, and therefore doubted: but "after eight days" (for seven, counting both extremes), Jesus again appeared in spite of shut doors, and permitted the doubting Thomas to touch his wounds. Here the original Gospel of John ended, all critics agreeing that chap. xxi is from a later hand. According to this appendix, "After these things Jesus again manifested himself. . . . at the Sea of Tiberias" (or Sea of Galilee) to seven disciples—Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, the two sons of Zebedee (James and John) and two others unnamed (as if for the seven planets). These disciples had fished all night without result, and "morning already being come," Jesus stood on the shore, and worked the miracle of the multitudinous draft of one hundred and fifty-three fishes—a similar story evidently having been found in the *Gospel of Peter* (14), where the extant text is fragmentary.

In the extant text that replaces the lost ending of Mark (xvi. 9-20) we read: "Now having risen early the first day of the week, he (Jesus) appeared first to Mary the Magdalene (cf. John). . . . And after these things to two of them (disciples) as they walked he was manifested (as in Luke) in another form (supernatural or spiritual, as suggested by his disappearance in Luke, and his reappearance in spite of shut doors in John). . . . Afterward, as they reclined at table, to the eleven he was manifested" (as in Luke). In Acts x. 39-41, it is said of Jesus: "This one God raised up on the third day, and gave him to become manifest, not to all the people, but to witnesses who had been chosen before by God, to us (the eleven Apostles) who did eat and drink with him after he had risen from among the dead" (as in Luke); and again, in Acts i. 23, we read of the Apostles "to whom also he (Jesus) presented himself living after he had suffered, with many proofs, during forty days having been seen by them" (cf. xiii. 31, where it is said that Jesus "appeared for many days to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem"). In 1 Cor. xv. 3-8, Paul says that he testified to what he had received—that Christ "was raised the third day, according to the Scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas (= Peter), then to the twelve (v. r., 'eleven'). Then he appeared to about

five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some also are fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to an abortion, he appeared also to me." The several appearances to Paul are visionary rather than actual, as is the appearance to Ananias; and both come after the ascension of Jesus (Acts ix. 3-16; xxii. 6-21; xxiii. 11). There is no appearance to James in the canonical New Testament; but Jerome (*De Ver. Illust.*, II) cites the lost *Gospel of the Hebrews* for an account in which Jesus gave his grave-clothes to a servant of the priest and then appeared to James, who had sworn he would eat nothing from the hour of the Last Supper until he saw Jesus risen from the dead; so Jesus brought bread and blessed it and gave it to James, saying, "My brother, eat thy bread, for the Son of Man is risen from among those who sleep" (also in pseudo-Abdias, *Hist. Apostol.*, VI, 1, etc.).

In Matt. xxvii. 51-53, but nowhere else in the New Testament, it is stated that when Jesus died on the cross, "the veil of the temple was rent in two from top to bottom (as if for the mythic opening of the underworld at sunset), and the earth was shaken, and the rocks were rent, and the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints fallen asleep arose; and having gone forth out of their tombs after their arising, (they) entered into the holy city and appeared to many." According to the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, two of those who were thus resurrected gave the account of Christ's descent into hell which appears in that Gospel (II); the second Latin version of which puts the number of the resurrected at twelve thousand (II, 1). But this resurrection does not appear as of mythic origin, but rather to have been suggested by the earthquake that opened the graves—from which it is quite probable that only the spirits of the dead were originally conceived as coming forth, just as Ovid tells us that it was said "that the ghosts of the departed were walking, and the City (Rome) was shaken by earthquakes," while "the sad face of the sun gave a livid light" (cf. the darkness at the crucifixion of Jesus), at the time of the assassination of Julius Cæsar (*Met.*, XV, 780, 798). According to the *Book of the Great Decease*, there is a mighty earthquake both when a Buddha dies and when one is born (III, 19, 20).

III.

The gods who are fabled to have lived on earth are generally conceived to have ascended into the celestial regions after a terrestrial death; and similar ascensions, sometimes in the living material

body, are related of some human beings—these ascensions in some cases being visible, with witnesses, while in other cases they are invisible and unwitnessed, as when the god or man, or his lifeless body, is said to have disappeared suddenly from the earth.

When the solar Memnon was killed by Achilles, his mother Eos (the dawn) removed his body from the field of battle, and he was granted immortality by Zeus, who took him to Olympus (Serv. *ad Virg. Aen.* I, 493, etc.). The solar Dionysus descended alive into Hades, from which he led his lunar mother Semele, renaming her Thyone (= Inspired), and rising with her into Olympus (Apollod., III, 5, 3—the place where they emerged from the underworld being localized by the Troezenians in the temple of Artemis



THE ASCENSION OF ETANA, BORNE BY AN EAGLE.

Babylonian seal. (From Messerschmidt, *Berichte a. d. k. Kunstsammlung*, 1908, No. 232.)

Soteira, while the Argives said it was the Aleyonian lake (Pausan., II, 31, 1; 37, 5). The solar Heracles went alive upon his funeral pyre, and when it was set ablaze he was taken to Olympus by Zeus in a chariot drawn by four horses, or on a cloud amid peals of thunder (Ovid, *Met.*, IX, 255-272, etc.); and Elijah was borne to heaven by a whirlwind, in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire (2 Kings ii. 11). The hero Amphiaraus, when pursued by an enemy was swallowed up by the earth, together with his chariot; but Zeus rescued him and took him to Olympus (Pind., *Nem.*, IX, 57; *Ol.*, VI, 21, etc.). Castor and Pollux, who were supposed to have lived and died on earth before the Trojan war, were fabled to ascend from the underworld on alternate days; one remaining below while the other is in Olympus (Homer, *Il.*, II, 243—perhaps originally

figures of day and night). Æsculapius, son of Apollo (the sun) and Coronis (= the crow, for the night), and himself of solar character, was killed with a flash of lightning by Zeus (see above), who placed him among the stars at the request of Apollo (Hygin., *Poet. Astr.*, II, 22—Heracles, Castor and Pollux and many others also becoming constellation figures after death). Manco Capac, accompanied by his sister Mama Oello (for the sun and moon), descended from heaven to establish civilization among the ancient Peruvians, and he finally ascended to his father, the sun (Bancroft, *Native Races*, III, p. 269). The Babylonian hero Etana ascended to heaven clinging to an eagle, but fell to the earth with the bird and died (doubtless as suggested by the rising and setting of the sun—Jastrow, *Rel. Bab. and Ass.*, p. 519). The Egyptian kings, as early as the Pyramid texts, were conceived as ascending to heaven at death, borne by the mythic seref, a sort of griffin. Thus, too, the Egyptian Ptolemies and the Greek kings of the East were supposed to ascend among the gods after the life on earth; and nearly all the Roman emperors were deified by a formal ceremony of apotheosis, a waxen image of the deceased being burnt on a sumptuous funeral pyre from which an eagle was set free to bear the soul into the heaven (see Herodian, IV, 2). From extant representations of such apotheoses we know that more than sixty individuals, male and female, received these honors from the time of Julius Cæsar to that of Constantine the Great. Julius Cæsar was deified by a decree of the Senate, and his soul is said to have appeared as a comet that blazed for seven days shortly after his death (Ovid, *Met.*, XV, 840 seq.; Sueton., *J. Cæsar*, 88). While the body of Augustus was burning, a man of prætorian rank "saw his spirit ascend from the funeral pyre to heaven" (Sueton., *August.*, 100).



ASCENSION OF A ROMAN, supposed to be Germanicus. Agate (From Monfaucon, *Antiq. Expl.*, Suppl. Vol. II, p. 137.)

According to the *Shah Nameh* (VII, 62, 63), the glorious career of Kai-Khosrau (Cyrus) was terminated by his disappearance at sunrise in a mountain spring, all his followers dying in a snow-storm shortly after. Romulus disappeared from earth in a dense mist and a terrific thunderstorm while reviewing his troops on the field of

Vulgate adds. Thus we read in Heb. xi. 5: "By faith Enoch was taken up, that he should not see death"; and Josephus says that "Enoch departed to the deity" (*Antiq.*, I, 3, 4). In the *Book of Enoch*, he is hidden and in communication with angels while still living (XII, 1) as also in the *Book of Jubilees* (IV, 21). Again, in the *Book of Enoch* he is borne toward the west and carried alive into heaven by a whirlwind (XXXIX, 3; LII, 1; cf. XIV, 8—only his spirit being translated, according to LXXI, 1, 5, 6). Here we doubtless have the immediate suggestion for John's visit to heaven in the spirit, according to Revelation (iv. 1, 2; cf. i. 10), in which book Elijah and Enoch probably appear as the "two witnesses" who are slain (after their return to earth) and resurrected after three and a half days—"And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake" (xi. 3, 7-12). The solar Enoch has been identified with the Babylonian Izdubar, the fabulous King of Unuk (= Enoch) or Erech (*Cyclopædia Biblica*, s. v. "Cainites," 6), who descends into the underworld and again returns to earth (see above). According to the *Fo-sho-hing-tsan-king*, Buddha at one time rose into the air, where he remained seated, "diffusing his glory as the light of the sun" (IV, 20); and again he ascended into heaven for three months, preaching to his mother and converting the devas (angels), and then returning to earth, on a celestial ladder (*ibid.*, and *Travels of Fa-hien*, XXVII). Mohammed is fabled to have been transported in one night from the temple of Mecca to that of Jerusalem, and thence through the seven heavens and back to earth (*Koran*, XVII, and Sale's note, p. 226). Hiram, King of Tyre, is said to have been received alive into paradise, by way of reward for supplying the timbers for Solomon's temple; but after a thousand years he sinned through pride and was thrust into hell (Eisenmeyer, *Ent. Jud.*, I, 868). Nebuchadnezzar, after prophesying the destruction of Babylon by the Medes and Persians, vanished out of the sight of men, according to Abydenus (in Euseb., *Præp. Evang.*, IX, p. 456).

In the extant text that replaces the lost ending of Mark, the ascension of Jesus is introduced with the simple words: "The Lord indeed therefore after speaking to them (the Apostles) was taken up into the heaven (apparently from the dining-room), and sat at the right hand of God" (verse 19—with the final phrase suggested by Ps. cx. 1, as also in Mark xii. 36; Acts ii. 25; vii. 55, etc.). There is nothing of this in Matthew or John; but the latter makes Jesus allude to his ascension (xx. 17, etc.). According to Luke xxiv. 50,

the resurrected Jesus led the eleven Apostles "out as far as Bethany, and having lifted up his hands, he blessed them. And it came to pass, as he was blessing them, he was separated from them and was carried up into the heaven." In Acts i. 3-11, it is said that Jesus had been seen by the eleven "during forty days" after his resurrection; and finally, on the Mount of Olives, "they, beholding him, he was taken up, and a cloud withdrew him from their eyes (i. e., 'their sight'). And as they were looking intently into the heaven as he was going, behold two men (= angels) stood by them in white apparel, who also said, Men, Galileans, why do you stand looking into the heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into the heaven, thus will come (down) in the manner ye behold him going into the heaven"—i. e., he will descend in the future on a cloud, as suggested by Dan. vii. 13; cf. Mark xiii. 26, etc., and also the ascensions of Heracles, Moses (from a mountain) and the "two witnesses" in Revelation. The two men = angels were probably suggested by the two "men" in the tomb of the resurrected Jesus, according to Luke, followed by John. In the Syriac *Teaching of the Apostles*, the ascension of Jesus is definitely assigned to the day of Pentecost, and it is said in two of the three extant manuscripts of this work, "At the completion of fifty days after his resurrection, make ye a commemoration of his ascension." Indeed there can be little doubt that the forty days of Acts are variant representatives of the $7 \times 7 = 49$ days from the second day of the Passover, Nisan 16, to Pentecost, the feast of the fiftieth day, which was also called the Feast of (Seven) Weeks—the whole period being a great harvest festival, while the resurrected Christ is the "first-fruit" of the day, in 1 Cor. xv. 20, 23. Pentecost, on Sivan 6, was finally recognized as the anniversary of the Giving of the Law on Sinai, after Moses had remained on the mountain forty days, during which he fasted (Ex. xxiv. 18; xxxiv. 28, etc.); and Nisan 26, just forty days before Pentecost, is assigned to the death of Joshua (= Jesus; Greek Iêsous) in the later Jewish calendar (see M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopadia*, s. v. "Calendar"). Thus there is a possibility that some of the earliest Jewish Christians, recognizing Joshua as a type of Jesus Christ, assigned the latter's death to Nisan 26, and his resurrection to Pentecost. In the first *Toledoth Jeschu* (of medieval Jewish origin) it is said that Peter commanded that the ascension of Jesus, on the fortieth day after his death, should be celebrated "in place of the Feast of Pentecost" (see Baring-Gould, *Lost and Hostile Gospels*, p. 91). In the *Apostolic Constitutions* (V. 20), the ascension is placed ten days before Pentecost and forty days after

the Gospel resurrection, which is thus assigned to Nisan 16—at sunrise, about forty hours after the death of Jesus in the afternoon of the day of preparation for the Passover, Nisan 14. Thus the original Lenten season was fixed at forty hours (Tertull., *De Jejun.*, II, 13, etc.), for which finally were substituted the forty days of the fasts of Moses, Elijah (1 Kings xix. 8) and Jesus (Matt. iv. 2). But it cannot be supposed that this typical fast period, or any other Biblical forty days, suggested the interval between the resurrection and ascension of Jesus in Acts; the primary suggestion for which is probably found in the forty days assigned by the Romans to the “dog days” as belonging to the ancient midsummer reign of the Dog Star, Sirius—the Greeks, however, assigned fifty days to this period (see Allen, *Star Names*, p. 126, etc.). As Isis was sometimes identified with Sept or Sirius, and as the reign of this star was connected with the resurrection of Osiris at the beginning of the Egyptian year at the summer solstice (as we saw in an earlier section of this article), it was natural enough for some of the primitive Christians to assign the forty or fifty days to the earthly resurrection period of Jesus, transferring them to the Palestinian harvest season beginning at about the time of the spring equinox.

In accordance with the solar mythos, it was conceived by some that Jesus also ascended into heaven immediately after his resurrection or return from the underworld, and that he shortly descended to earth again (like Romulus) for the sojourn of forty days. In the old Latin Codex Bobbiensis, at Mark xvi. 4, angels from heaven ascend with Jesus from the tomb, in the brightness of the living God; and then the stone is seen to have been rolled from the door (see Resch, *Agrapha*, p. 454). In the *Gospel of Peter* (8-10), the tomb of Jesus is guarded by soldiers and elders of the Jews—“And in the night in which the Lord’s day was drawing on,” two angels descended; the stone rolled of itself from the door, and they saw “three men come forth from the tomb, and two of them supported one, and a cross following them: and of the two the head (i. e., the heads of the two angels) reached unto the heaven, but the head of him (Jesus) that was led by them overpassed the heaven. And they heard a voice from the heavens, saying, Thou hast preached to them that sleep. And a response was heard from the cross. Yea” (all of which evidently relates to an immediate ascent into heaven). In the *Gospel of Nicodemus* we have a circumstantial account of Christ’s descent into hades or hell, from which he delivers the saints or just ones, rising with them into paradise, where he finds the translated Elijah and Enoch and also the penitent robber

who was crucified with him (II, 8-10; cf. Luke xxiii. 43, for the robber); and according to both *Nicodemus* (I, 15) and the *Narrative of Joseph of Arimathæa* (4), when Christ returned to earth he first appeared to Joseph of Arimathæa—accompanied by the penitent robber, according to the *Narrative*. A priest, a teacher (or soldier) and a Levite testify to having seen the ascension of Jesus from the Mount of Olives, according to *Nicodemus* (I, 14, 16); the second Greek form of this Gospel, in I, 14, including these three witnesses among the five hundred of I Cor. xv. 6, and representing all of them as having been present at the ascension of Jesus.

In the *Falling Asleep of Mary* and the *Passing of Mary* (first Latin form), when she dies in her old age her soul is taken to paradise by Jesus, and her body is borne thither by angels three days after her entombment; but in the second Latin form of the latter book, she is resurrected from her tomb by Jesus, who delivers her soul to angels, and “He was lifted up on a cloud and taken back into heaven, and the angels along with Him, carrying the blessed Mary into the paradise of God.” Thus associated with the solar Jesus, Mary appears to be of lunar character; indeed in the second Latin form of the *Passing of Mary* it is said that before her entombment, “There appeared above the bier a cloud exceeding great, like the great circle which is wont to appear beside (for ‘around’) the splendor of the moon.” (For other stories of the so-called Assumption of the Virgin Mary see R. A. Lipsius, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten*, I, 13).